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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 006467

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SUBJECT: EMBLEM: ICRC DESCRIBES TIMELINE, PROGRESS IN
MDA-PRCS NEGOTIATIONS

REF: JERUSALEM 05069

Classified By: Ambassador Richard Jones for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: During November 8 - 10 conversations with Poloffs, ICRC Head of Delegation Dominik Stillhart and Swiss Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Andrej Motyl expressed continuing ICRC and Swiss commitment to convening the December 5 - 6 conference on the Third Protocol, but also articulated concern about the slow progress of meetings between the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Magen David Adom (MDA), and about the increasingly organized opposition of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). END SUMMARY.

SWISS AND ICRC OFFICIALS PRESS SOCIETIES TO REACH AGREEMENT

2. (C) ICRC Head of Delegation Dominik Stillhart told Poloffs that the Swiss government is pressing PRCS and MDA officials to try to achieve significant progress toward a framework agreement by November 16, when MDA Chairman Noam Yifrach and PRCS President Younis Al Khatib will return from the regularly scheduled ICRC meetings they are currently attending in Seoul. Stillhart said that Swiss government officials convened technical meetings November 8 - 9 in Israel among working level PRCS-MDA officials to produce a joint letter to send to Yifrach and Younis in Seoul. Yifrach and Younis will then have a chance to meet in person at the conference, Stillhart said, where they will use the agreed letter as a basis for discussions that will address more contentious questions of principle.

3. (C) Stillhart said the ICRC and the Swiss would like the Younis-Yifrach discussions in Seoul to conclude with a draft framework agreement, which they can then present to their respective governments upon their return. Even if the framework agreement does not resolve every controversial issue before the conference begins, Stillhart explained, he believes it can contribute to a successful conference if it signals the societies' clear intent to work together constructively in the future.

CONCERNS ABOUT SLOW NEGOTIATIONS AND COMMITTED SPOILERS

4. (C) Stillhart also said that "the two societies must reach agreement before the conference," or, Swiss and ICRC officials fear, Arab and Muslim countries will vote against the Third Protocol. Stillhart described positive progress at the PRCS-MDA meetings November 8, but expressed concern about the meetings November 9 when the participants failed to produce agreed text for the letter that Swiss officials planned to send to Seoul on the same day. Stillhart said the participants could not agree because MDA officials reversed their promise of the previous day to lobby the GOI to facilitate the movement of PRCS ambulances in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

5. (C) In addition, Stillhart said, conference opponents such as Palestinian Foreign Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa continue to lobby undecided governments to vote against the Third Protocol. Stillhart reported that in Geneva November 9 Swiss Ambassador at Large for the Emblems of the Geneva Conventions Didier Pfirter learned from OIC representatives that they may request, as the first matter of business when the conference opens December 5, that the conference be immediately suspended pending a December 6 OIC meeting in Jeddah. Participants at the OIC meeting December 6 would then have an opportunity to reconfirm their commitment to the Sanaa statement opposing the timing of the conference.

6. (C) Swiss DCM Motyl told the DCM November 8 that the Swiss government does not want a "partial resolution" of the problem, in which MDA will be accepted into the movement without the consent of the Muslim world. "If we foresee a clash of civilizations scenario," he said, "we will call off the conference. We are not willing to sacrifice the movement's good atmosphere." While expressing these concerns, both Motyl and Stillhart stressed that the Swiss government and the ICRC remain committed to holding the

conference. "The Swiss don't want to be seen as the ones
hesitating," Stillhart said.

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JONES